

Education and Student Affairs Committee Memorandum
Board of Regents, State of Iowa

Subject: Faculty Activity Analysis

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Date Submitted: September 1, 2004

Recommended Action:

Discuss alternatives for collecting information on Faculty Activities and provide the Board Office and institutions with directions for future Faculty Activity reporting.

Executive Summary:

In June during the discussion of the Annual Faculty Activity Report, the Board asked that the Board reassess the value and purpose of this report. It was suggested that perhaps the report could be more focused and crisp in the measures used. The Board Office was asked to consult with the institutions to assess this and see if this is the best way to measure faculty activities. The Board Office has convened a group of institutional representatives and several suggestions for improvement have been developed. Specifically, the group suggested that the current report be replaced with a briefer more focused report.

Background:

Nationally, faculty activity reporting, sometimes referred to as "faculty workload" reporting, has been undertaken since at least 1919 (Koos, 1919). Writing in 1970, Robert Williams from the University of Michigan noted that the various faculty activity studies that he reviewed found that faculty spend an average of 50-55 hours each week in teaching research and service (1/2 teaching related, 1/4 research and 1/4 service). More recent studies, including some longitudinal studies, are generally consistent with these earlier findings with the exception that the amount of time devoted to teaching may have declined slightly.

There is shared skepticism about the reliability of such studies by faculty, administrators and the public. According to several assessments, the public and some administrators feel that the self reported studies are suspect and the data inflated. Faculty may acknowledge the accuracy of the data but not the validity of comparisons of that data between institutions and disciplines (Williams, 1970 and Yaker, 1984). None the less, the studies have been continued over the years because they do provide some information regarding the various professional

responsibilities of faculty and most are reasonably easy to collect. The more exacting studies of productivity undertaken in the industrial world are inappropriate for professional persons with varied responsibilities in complex institutions. As someone once said "Education is a process of converting tangible resources into intangible resources." The attributes of education are such that they are not adequately accounted for by simple "input –output" approach.

The *first* step in deciding on future Regent faculty activity reporting is to know that the Regents still want to get a periodic report on faculty activities. The working group agreed that some kind of a faculty activity report is needed but that the current report is too complex and detailed for addressing current needs. It was recommended that a new report be developed that is more crisp and focused. One such approach might be to simply identify related faculty activity indicators to supplement the current Annual Performance Indicator Report.

Secondly, if the report is to continue to be prepared, the Board needs to identify the purpose(s) that the faculty activity studies are intended to address. Nationally, faculty activity studies have served various purposes such as workload measures for collective bargaining, internal measures for cost analysis, measures of workload equity, grant accountability, responses to statutory and policy mandates in almost every state for public relations/accountability purposes. In Iowa, the current Faculty Activity report is not used internally by the institutions so its only purposes are to respond to Board policy which requires the reporting for public relations and accountability purposes.

Thirdly, once the purpose of the faculty activity reporting is known, the working group will come back to the Board to propose one or more general approaches to collecting the data that might include such as the development of select indicators as noted earlier, the Regent Universities participation in select national studies such as the "Delaware Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity", faculty case studies, reports based on actual annual faculty portfolios from the Regent Universities, and special surveys.